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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000272

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER AND AF/SE NATSIOS, NSC FOR
PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY

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SUBJECT: SUDAN: END OF TOUR REPORT

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Note: the following represents the end of tour report of departing Political/Economic Counselor Eric Whitaker, who served at Embassy Khartoum from August 2005) February 2007.

The opinions expressed are his own reflections on his experiences over the course of his tour, as well as from his brief service at Embassy Khartoum in 1993 as Refugee Affairs Coordinator. End note.

Overview: 12 Years and a Cloud of Dust

¶2. (C) In August 2005, I returned to Khartoum after a 12-year absence. The first thing I saw in the dark of the evening was a colorful Ferris wheel, and an airport completely surrounded by the lights from oil-fueled development. In the first few days, I was impressed to see signs of growth throughout the burgeoning urban area of Khartoum, which had doubled in population from around 3 million to nearly 6 million. Despite a new shopping mall, and the presence of 18 airlines, it soon became evident that while there was new money, it stayed in Khartoum. And, beneath the surface, the cultural animosities between the North and the South continued despite the newly found peace. Furthermore, petroleum export revenues now permitted the government to prosecute retribution upon Darfur, even as the civil war was coming to an end at long last.

CPA and the North-South Challenge: No Fabric to Mend

¶3. (C) Many speak of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) as bringing an end to a 21-year North-South civil war. Actually, it ended overt combat between two different cultures that had fought from 1955) 1972 and from 1983)

¶2004. Others speak of using the CPA and oil money to re-knit the fabric of Sudan, when actually the North and the South had never been parts of the same fabric. The sheer size and ethnic diversity of Sudan make central governance difficult. The perceived exoticism of the South, with the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, and Azande, mask the true nature of the North) which is tribal itself. To many in the North, stewardship and control of Sudan is the charge of the Northern, riparian Arabized people) the Ja'alin, Dongoladeen, and Shaygiya peoples. The ruling clique, composed of a few dozen representatives from among these three groups, regards their guidance as a sacred trust.

¶4. (C) The CPA is a marvelously complex document negotiated over nearly three years. It creates some 52 commissions,

boards, committees, and working groups, guaranteeing a complex, deliberative process of@QQY! questions remain as to its sincerity, the sequencing of implementation, and the selectivity of those sections which have so far been put into practice. The government has harvested the low hanging fruit already, leaving the difficult stages fQ last. The CPA gradually is taking shape, although many key elements) at least in the eyes of the South - are lacking: implementation of the Abyei Boundaries Commission findings, completion of the North-South Technical ad hoc Border Committee's research, and formation of a national electoral commission) a necessary step for the 2009 general elections.

¶15. (C) The Government of National Unity (GNU) commenced in September 2005; its first anniversary passed quietly, with the North valuing the July 2005 founding of the Presidency, and the South prizes the January 2005 signing of the CPA. The National Congress Party, an Islamic clique, continues to dominate Sudan, with Southern ministers rendered ineffective by their underlings and Southern state ministers given minor portfolios. To a large extent, the South has checked out of the GNU, as the North's "mechanical majority" renders many issues moot. Many Southerners from the inception chose to focus on the South to the detriment of the national level, although the prospect of the 2009 national elections invites the South to revisit that calculation.

¶16. (C) Following the July 2005 death of John Garang, the South has not fully recovered. Garangists abound, declaring that Sudan would not be as it is today if John were still alive. Garang, a larger than life persona filled with

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charisma and articulating a vision for all of Sudan's marginalized peoples, indeed left difficult shoes to fill. Salva Kiir, however, has done well in many aspects since, particularly in that he continues to wear four hats: First Vice President of the GNU, President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), Chairman of the SPLM, and Commander in Chief of the SPLA. His leadership style is deliberative, collaborative, and tactical, in contrast to Garang's sharp, autocratic, and strategic approach. He has consolidated his power base, in part by reaching out and including key individuals from diverse sources. Kiir, who only spends a couple of days each month in Khartoum, travels abroad frequently, building a network of foreign support for the South's development efforts.

¶17. (C) The GoSS with a cabinet rumored soon to change, is hard pressed to invest oil revenues wisely in building the infrastructure and health and education sectors of the South. A limited pool of talented human resources, slow trickle of returning diaspora from the intelligentsia, and avenues for corruption mitigate against more rapid development, although the blossoming of the long-suppressed industriousness of Southerners and the fast growing trade linkages with Kenya and Uganda bode well.

Darfur: A Harsh Climate for a Lasting Peace

¶18. (C) The Darfur conflict now stands at the four-year mark. The media seeks to frame it as a war between light-skinned Arabs and black Africans over grazing land and watering rights, despite the reality that all Darfurians are black Muslim Africans, with some more Arabized than others, and that the conflict involves a government-sponsored land-grab and forced eviction of the less Arabized. The conflict is far more difficult to define, as it involves center versus periphery control issues and deeply set cultural animosities.

¶19. (C) The parties involved have multiplied dramatically, as have the forms of violence taking place. Dozens of rebel groups) Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signatories, non-signatories, and Declaration of Commitment signatories,

as well as Chadian rebels) all remain stakeholders in the conflict, with civilians and a small civil society having minimal impact on the course of events. Rebels, aided by Chad, Eritrea, and/or Libya, are fickle, recalcitrant, and prone to shifting loyalties. The time-honored practice of the Sudanese government of dividing and conquering has rendered rebel unity an oxymoron. Gaining unified support for the DPA is thus made even more difficult. If rebel unity were to occur, however, it could give the Sudanese Armed Forces, already overmatched, an even harsher setback.

¶10. (C) Efforts to gain further adherents to the DPA straggle on, with issues of further compensation and janjaweed disarmament going unaddressed. Aside from a singular and theatrical disarmament ceremony in June 2006, no effort is underway to undertake this core element of the DPA. Instead, one can watch janjaweed engage in calisthenics in El Fasher as they are incorporated in the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Popular Defense Forces, the border security forces, or local police units.

¶11. (C) Perhaps in an attempt to decrease the number of foreign witnesses and those who can report to the outside world, humanitarian presence and operating space will increasingly wither. Recent events demonstrate a willingness to not only tolerate but to instigate abuses of those who have come to provide basic relief goods and services for the two million Darfuri internally displaced persons (IDPs). Further disruptions of humanitarian efforts are likely to take place, as those who serve the IDPs are increasingly identified as a reason why the conflict will not go away. As well, the IDPs are seen not as victims, but as the problem, for if they returned to their home villages, the international community might have fewer visible things to point to when the media come to cover another colorful and compelling IDP story. The ability of humanitarian organizations to operate successfully in Darfur may further erode over time, with recruitment for future workers becoming more challenging.

¶12. (C) The introduction of a UN peacekeeping operation, in contrast to the current African Union ceasefire monitoring effort, holds promise, but falls short of the UNCSR 1706 dream of many. The UN cannot recruit or accommodate its essential transition corps, and will take far longer than the

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international community has patience for, even assuming that the Sudanese government has a change of heart about accepting a hybrid force. It is likely that Sudan will keep recrafting its verbiage, slowly permitting a carefully defined peacekeeping force that meets the low troop estimates it pushes the African Union to provide. Western impatience, combined with Sudanese recalcitrance and UN bureaucratic red tape, is a recipe for frustration all around.

Human Rights: Understated Problems, Unspoken Grievances

¶13. (C) All manner of human rights problems persist in Sudan, from the multiple atrocities heaped on the citizenry of Darfur to continuing violence against women, child camel jockeys in the Persian Gulf, curtailment of press freedom, and child soldiers. Such is the extent and banality of human rights abuses that they are not high on the agenda of Sudan's nascent civil society. Only once the Darfur conflict has been resolved and the national elections further advance the north-South political equation can attention turn to what should be a major concern of Sudan's populace.

¶14. (C) Religious freedom, however, shows a number of signs of progress, with the recent appointment of the Chair of the CPA-provided Commission on the Protection of the Rights of Non-Muslims in the National Capital. Unfortunately, this Commission has yet to be established. Even so, it is

projected to have 28 members, raising the prospect of difficulty in attaining a quorum at meetings and almost guaranteeing that any actions taken will be highly deliberative and likely conservative. That said, churches abound, and people worship or do not worship in freedom, even as it is a very difficult and time consuming process to obtain land and building permits to construct new churches (but not new mosques). Sudan, however, is not like Eritrea or Saudi Arabia, locations where this writer has spent time, and should not be considered within that same, harsh category.

U.S.)Sudan Bilateral Relationship: Frustration All Around

¶15. (C) Working relations with the MFA are cordial, although minimally productive. Over the past one and one-half years, we have seen a rapidly changing cast on each side of the relationship, with one thing constant: Sudanese chafing at what it sees as a series of U.S. sticks without any carrots.

¶16. (C) Despite the extensive U.S. economic sanctions) with little interest so far expressed regarding opportunities in the South, Three Areas, etc. stemming from the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act) business folk advise that they are able to purchase U.S. goods in the Persian Gulf. Bought retail rather than wholesale, goods simply cost more and take longer to get. The sanctions have pushed Sudan toward China, India, and Gulf suppliers of goods and services, but increasingly also Turkey and South Africa.

¶17. (C) It is likely that the bilateral relationship will muddle along, with occasional improvements and frequent setbacks owing to misunderstandings, talking past each other, and the issuance of multiple messages. The single factor holding the prospect for most significant) but negative) change in the bilateral relationship would occur if efforts to advance a Plan A success in Darfur fall victim to a well intended but poorly thought-out stampede toward Plan B. If a Plan B were launched, hopes for a New Embassy Compound, New Consulate Compound, and other positive, future-oriented activities would be dashed, and mission drawdown would become a central concern. An evacuation of personnel, unfortunate and avoidable, would thus take us back to where this writer's story with Sudan began.

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